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ABSTRACT

Techniques used by large and small institutions to trace and keep track of alumni are outlined, based on data from a national survey. Additionally, two articles on recordkeeping are presented. For 19 of the 27 institutions surveyed, information is provided on: institutional data regarding alumni population, staff assigned to tracing lost alumni, tracing processes, reinitiating contact with found alumni, and preventive measures. The institutions were asked whether they had used outside agencies to help trace alumni, what factors affected this decision, and their experiences with such agencies, which take the form of tracer companies and alumni directory publishing firms. Overall, the experiences of institutions that have used outside agencies were not encouraging. Among the factors affecting the process of locating lost alumni are the following: historical accuracy of records, data collected on alumni, demographic distribution of alumni, definition of an alumnus, nature of alumnus's degree, and institutional prestige. Sample tracing cards and questionnaires are appended, along with the following articles: "The Great Alumni Trace: Out of the Files and into the Computer," (Joyce Baggerly); and "'Lost' Donors: 90 Percent May Be Recoverable," (Fund-Raising Institute). (SW)

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ED211006

Finding Lost Alumni: Tracing Methods Used by 19 Institutions

by Brian Gorman

In cooperation with the Development Services Office of Development Office, Syracuse University

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INTRODUCTION

Lost alumni have a way of turning up in the strangest places. Some will write to ask why they haven't been receiving the Alumni News for the last 10 years; others may surface through news clippings. Unfortunately, too many may never be found. With the growing importance of development to schools, colleges, and universities, it is critical that we know who and where our alumni are.

I conducted this study on the premise that preventing alumni from becoming lost and tracing those who do are important to all of us. Several factors preclude an analysis correlating the data presented here. Primary among these is the broad range of working definitions for both "lost" and "alumni." For example, some institutions immediately report as lost all alumni for whom any piece of mail has been returned; others would not consider the same individuals as lost until the institution had exhausted all possible methods of tracing them. Some institutions include the alumni in their lost file only for a limited period of time, while others carry lost records from the earliest days of the institution.

There are similar difficulties in defining who is an alumnus. Although most institutions define alumni as degree recipients, some include students who have:

--completed course work at the institution;

--matriculated in a degree program;

--enrolled in a degree program for at least six weeks;

--completed one semester in a degree program;

--completed two quarters of study;

--completed two semesters of study;

--completed two years of study.

Many institutions have provisions for making exceptions to the definition, and at any institution the definition may have changed several times over the years. Although it is not a major focus of this research project, the question of who is an alumnus is important to us all and deserves more thought.

Although this report does not present correlational data, it does offer a range of ideas and experiences that may contri-

bute to the improvement of alumni records operations. I queried a total of 27 institutions for this survey; data from 19 are reported here. Five others have no tracing process (or a minimal process). One has 80 percent of its alumni living within a 100-mile radius, which makes its situation unique. Two other institutions have requested that the information they provided be shared only with the initial participating institutions.

The topics included in this report are: using outside agencies, institutional data regarding alumni population, staff assigned to tracing lost alumni, tracing processes, reinitiating contact with found alumni, preventive measures, and concluding comments.

In conducting the survey I found everyone I spoke to more than willing to give of their time and ideas. To all of you, my sincerest thanks. I hope that those who read this report find it as valuable as we at Syracuse University have.

--Brian Gorman*

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*Brian Gorman is now Director of Annual Giving at the University of Minnesota Foundation.

USING OUTSIDE AGENCIES

As finding lost alumni becomes increasingly important, the number of outside agencies interested in becoming involved in the process continues to grow. These agencies take the form of tracer companies and alumni directory publishing firms. I asked participating institutions to report whether they had ever considered using such procedures, and what factors affected their decision. I also asked those institutions that had contracted with outside agencies to summarize their experiences.

In deciding whether to use outside agencies, institutions reported several factors as important. Among these were cost (for tracers), timeliness of the directory, and validity of the information gathered. Other concerns included the confidentiality of alumni information and the availability of information to provide these agencies as a starting point for their tracing efforts.

Overall, the experiences of institutions that have turned to outside agencies were less than encouraging. In many instances the tracer companies and directory publishers were unable to find any, or found very few, alumni the school could not locate. One institution reported that the names the company provided did match those of lost alumni, but that, when the individuals were contacted, the school discovered that many of them were not alumni and had never attended the institution. It was not uncommon for directories to be out of date, in some cases by two or more years.

Most directory companies do not charge the institution, but make their profits on sales. Tracer companies generally charge for the number of names researched or the number of "alumni" found. One institution surveyed arranged a unique contract with a tracer company; it agreed to pay as the fee 50 percent of the first gift received from the found alumni. The school reported minimal satisfaction with the results; the tracer company was extremely unhappy with the fee it received.

HOW THE INSTITUTIONS TRACE ALUMNI

ACADEMY OF THE HOLY ANGELS

ALUMNI POPULATION: 5,200 (total)

452 (lost)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. The school publishes the names of lost alumni in the alumni newsletter and asks for current information.

2. Telephone directories are used in seeking to locate alumni locally.

3. Reunion committee members receive a listing of their lost classmates, including parents' names and addresses. The school encourages committee members to attempt to locate their missing classmates through use of this information.

4. When it knows that a relative of the missing alumnus has also attended the institution, the school will contact that individual.

5. Recently, the school has expanded permanent records to include the names of brothers and sisters (in addition to parents) and the college attended. This provides additional tracking resource material.

6. A class listing of lost alumni is regularly made available to faculty, as well as to retired Academy sisters. These individuals have proven to be valuable sources of current information.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. Each alumni newsletter includes a reminder asking graduates to notify the school of any name and/or address changes. It also includes a request for current information.

2. The alumni newsletter is sent address correction requested. A note on the outside of each issue asks parents to provide the school with current information if their son or daughter no longer lives at that address.

3. Transcript requests received by the registrar's office are periodically checked against alumni records.

THE BALDWIN SCHOOL

ALUMNI POPULATION: 4,000 (living)

200 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. The Baldwin School is an academically rigorous school with a strong parent constituency. Therefore, the first step in the tracing process is generally to contact the alumnus's parents and/or college alumni office.

2. The school keeps records of family ties among alumni. Aunts, cousins, sisters, and so on prove to be helpful in tracing lost alumni.

3. If the alumnus was a long-term resident of a particular area, the school uses phone directories and directory assistance.

4. Reunions are held every five years. Each reunion mailing contains the names of lost classmates and asks for any information available on the alumnus's whereabouts.

5. On alumni day a large poster was prominently displayed. It listed lost alumni by decade and asked for tracing contacts and/or current information.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once the school locates an alumnus, it immediately sends a mailing. The mailing contains backdated alumni magazines, any important communiques that have been sent to alumni, a survey form for updating records, and a personal note.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. A periodic survey of alumni asks, among other things, for the names, addresses, and phone numbers of contacts who will know their whereabouts.

2. The school regularly reminds faculty at meetings to provide the alumni office with alumni news and address changes.

3. Transcript requests received by the registrar are cross-checked against alumni records.

4. Each issue of the alumni magazine contains on the cover (in bold-face print and at an angle to catch attention) the following statement: "Please keep us informed. It automatically costs us 25¢ when we send this to your old address."

5. Any communications with alumni that call for return correspondence include a request for names, addresses, and phone numbers.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 130,000 (good addresses)

30,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

A variety of procedures is used to trace lost alumni, depending on the individual situation.

1. A list of 100 lost alumni is published in each issue of the alumni paper. For each listing of 100, an average of two are found.

2. In the case of recent graduates, contact is made with parents or other relatives. This information is retrieved from registration records and/or admissions files.

3. Research is conducted through professional directories, Who's Who, and so on.

4. Phone directories and directory assistance are used.

5. Updating of information is often done through reunion chairpersons.

6. In the past, records have been exchanged with national fraternity headquarters. However, generally their records are worse than the institution's.

7. The university sends the employer a survey reflecting the information on file and requesting an update.

8. Corporate headquarters of matching gift companies will supply a list of alumni who are employees. Although they will not supply home addresses, they will generally forward mail.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

The names of found alumni are returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

The university distributes a graduation packet that includes an alumni card and a list of alumni benefits; it encourages alumni to keep in touch. In the past the registrar's office forwarded transcript requests; however, this is no longer done.

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 201,700

49,300 (lost addresses)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: one full-time, one part-time

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. The university builds a computerized tracing system from biographical files using family priority (father = 1, mother = 2, brother or sister = 3, and so on) with emphasis on those listed in the biographical information who have also attended BYU. This allows the university to use their ID number so that a computer update of the tracing file from the master file is possible.

2. Mailings are done on a limited basis, by zip code areas, allowing BYU to control the number of returns for efficient staff use.

3. From this same tracing system, BYU can make phone lists. A part-time staff member who works from her home (to free up office phones) uses this list in the local area. The actual cost of phoning is less than the cost of mailing, and a much higher percentage of return is achieved.

4. The university makes some use of newspaper clips and professional directories, and so on.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, the alumnus's address is updated and the alumnus starts receiving regular mailings.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. BYU runs a "lost alumni" form quarterly in its alumni newspaper.

2. Once a year on the back page of the alumni newspaper BYU runs an "are we getting to you" form asking for any corrections, additions, deletions from the regular mailings.

3. The university sends biographical mailers periodically. When the mailers are returned, BYU

uses them to update the master file and the computerized tracing file. They then become part of the permanent alumni file.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

ALUMNI POPULATION: 86,000 (living alumni)

5,000 (lost alumni)

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. The University of Chicago uses a broad range of resources in tracing lost alumni. The first step in tracing is research in sources such as: Who's Who, Standard & Poor's, Dun & Bradstreet, Social Registers, and so on. Registrar's transcripts, departmental lists, placements records, professional associations, clippings, reunion committees, and alumni club secretaries are other information sources used.

2. If the first step is unsuccessful, the alumnus is removed from the active mailing list. A double post card is sent to the alumnus at the last known address, as well as to others who might know the alumnus's whereabouts.

3. Second tracers are sent, if necessary; third and fourth notices have not proven very productive.

4. In cases where the person is not found, the university conducts additional research after the publication of new reference directories. Meanwhile, the alumnus's name is included on reunion and other "lost" lists.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

When an alumnus is found after a lengthy lapse of time, the university sends a personal letter.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

The university maintains an alphabetical file card on each alumnus. The card shows employer, degrees from other institutions, campus activities, spouse, name and addresses of persons who will always know his or her address, and so on.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 140,000 (total)

7,000 "frozen" (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: Three

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

Columbia uses a formalized tracing process that explores numerous avenues in the search, depending on the information available. The extent of the search is based on the alumnus's giving record and/or potential.

1. Upon receiving a mail return, the alumnus's record is coded, "freeze."

2. A freeze list is printed weekly and given to the clerks who deal with lost alumni. (This list includes contribution history.) Each clerk researches approximately 20 alumni per day.

3. A questionnaire is mailed to the alumnus at his or her last known business address. If this is unknown, the questionnaire is mailed to the last known address for his or her next of kin (other than spouse).

4. Directory assistance is used.

5. A check is made with the registrar's office (for recent graduates) to determine whether they have requested transcripts, degree certification, and so on. If so, the address is obtained.

6. A mailing is sent to the last known address, requesting forwarding and an address correction from the post office.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, an alumnus is "unfrozen" and returned to active mailing, unless he or she requests otherwise.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

Some of Columbia's colleges send questionnaires to alumni. Information obtained from these mailings is fed back into the records system.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 150,000 (total)

10,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: One full-time, one part-time

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

Cornell traces only degree recipients and nonrecipients with giving records. Lost alumni are removed from the active mailing list during the tracing process.

1. The university uses phone directories and directory assistance in an attempt to locate alumni who have moved locally.

2. A tracer card is mailed to references provided by the alumnus (see "Preventive Measures").

3. Frequently listings of lost alumni are sent out with class mailings.

4. Information concerning lost alumni is sought at alumni club meetings and activities.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, the alumnus is returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

During registration students fill out a form that requests the names and addresses of three references who will know their whereabouts in six years. It is suggested that they use relatives as references.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 200,000 (including Radcliffe)

8,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH:

Four persons are responsible for alumni records. Each spends one hour per day on lost alumni research.

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. Records are checked to determine whether another address is available.

2. Directory assistance is contacted to determine if the alumnus has moved locally.

3. The alumnus is coded as temporarily lost.

4. Professional directories and references are researched.

5. Class reports, published for each reunion, are checked to obtain further information that may be of help in tracing the alumnus.

6. If known, the alumnus's employer is contacted.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, an alumnus is returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. In the case of recent graduates, a home (parents') address is retained.

2. Immediately before graduation, a questionnaire is used. Information is collected concerning the alumnus's immediate plans (i.e. employer, graduate school, and so on).

HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

ALUMNI POPULATION: 12,000 (total, both colleges)

Number of lost alumni unreported

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. As soon as an address is identified as bad, a letter and tracing card are sent to the contacts provided through the alumni directory questionnaire (see "Preventive Measures" below).

2. In the case of recent alumni, parents are contacted for current information on the lost alumni.

3. Listings of lost alumni are published in the alumni newspaper, and current information on those listed is requested.

4. Directory assistance serves as another tracing source.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, the alumnus receives a letter, a records update request form, and back issues of the alumni magazine.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. An alumni directory questionnaire is sent to all alumni. Among other things, this form requests information on two contacts who will always know the alumnus's whereabouts.

2. Major mailings are sent with address correction requested.

3. Address changes are requested in each alumni newsletter.

4. The gift reply form in each fund-raising mailing contains the alumnus's name, address, and I.D. number; corrected information is requested.

5. Any time an address correction is received a new record update request form is sent to the alumnus.

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 80,000 (total)

12,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

Currently Kent State is not tracing lost alumni. The following includes processes used in the past and ideas that have not yet been implemented.

1. A mailing to the last known address, requesting updated information from the alumnus and a change of address from the post office.

2. Directory assistance, followed by a phone call to the alumnus. (This method yielded approximately 40 percent satisfactory results.)

3. Contacting other institutions that the alumnus attended.

4. Using individual department records to update alumni record information.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

The names of found alumni are returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. Currently, the alumni records staff is able to obtain parents' addresses from the registrar when this is provided by students.

2. In the future the university anticipates that it will obtain the names and addresses of references who will know the whereabouts of the alumnus.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 165,000 (good addresses only)

The number of new graduates vs. the number of lost and deceased alumni is about equal each year.

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. A first-class postcard is sent to the last known address. It requests updated information from the alumnus and the post office.

2. References listed on the alumnus's questionnaire are contacted (see "Preventive Measures").

3. Students are hired each summer to research lost alumni in the New York City phone directories. Success is largely dependent on how uncommon the alumnus's name is.

4. Alumni attending reunions are provided class lists that indicate those who are lost and those who are deceased. Information to update the records is sought.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, an alumnus is returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

Immediately after graduation, each alumnus is sent a letter of congratulations from the president of the alumni federation. This letter is not a solicitation. It contains a summary of alumni benefits, a statement that the alumnus will hear from his or her school association, and expresses the university's desire that he or she participate in alumni activities. Each letter is accompanied by a questionnaire surveying the alumnus's attitudes regarding NYU. The questionnaire also requests the names and addresses of three references who will always know the graduate's whereabouts.

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 85,000 (total)

6,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: One full-time equivalent

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. The university sends a first-class mailing to the last known address, noting that a previous mailing was returned and requesting an address correction.

2. Next of kin or other references are contacted to request updated information on the lost alumnus.

3. The alumnus's (former) employer is contacted.

4. If these efforts are unsuccessful the alumnus is coded as lost.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. Northeastern mails an alumni magazine monthly, thereby minimizing the length of time an alumnus would be lost before the institution is aware of his or her move.

2. At the time of graduation, the names and addresses of two references are gathered for each alumnus. These are people who will know the alumnus's whereabouts in the future.

CONTACTING THE LOST ALUMNUS:

Once located, the alumnus is returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

The Alumni Records Office, through each school, requests that students complete a questionnaire before graduation. The information requested includes: parents' name and address, future employer, undergraduate activities and honors, Social Security number, and date and place of birth.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

ALUMNI POPULATION: 60,000 (total)

Number of lost alumni unreported

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: Two part-time

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. A tracer card is sent to the last known address, or, if available, to the parents' address (in the case of recent alumni).

2. Class lists are sent out to each member of reunion classes. These lists include lost alumni and request help in finding them.

3. Alumni club secretaries periodically receive listings that include lost alumni.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

At the time of graduation, the university asks students to provide a mailing address, spouse's name, and employer's name and address.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

ALUMNI POPULATION: 160,000 (living)

15,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: One

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

The University of Pennsylvania uses a number of resources in searching for lost alumni. Thus, the following is more a listing of resources than a specific search strategy.

1. A Bell and Howell Phonefiche subscription provides microfiche copies of all phone directories for areas of 25,000 population and larger. If the alumnus is not located through a directory listing, mail is sent to the business address on file.

2. A broad range of reference directories (i.e. Social Register, Who's Who, and so on) are maintained for research purposes.

3. Lost alumni lists are included in class mailings; updated information is requested from classmates.

4. Various schools within the university maintain their own alumni listings.

5. National offices of fraternities are contacted.

6. Biographical files are maintained on each alumnus.

7. A parent's address is available through registration information. Calls are made to those who live locally; otherwise, a mailing is sent.

8. Within the past decade six major questionnaires have been mailed to alumni. The questionnaires indicate what information is on file and request that it be updated and supplemented with additional information. There has been apprcximately a 60 percent response to these requests. The information obtained is then available for tracing purposes.

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

ALUMNI POPULATION: 50,000 (total)

2,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: None

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

Various methods for tracing lost alumni are used, depending on how recently he or she graduated, the degree received (undergraduate or graduate), and information available. Once two pieces of mail are returned for a particular alumnus, he or she is coded, "No Mail - Temporarily Lost." Lost alumni are carried back to the class with the oldest known living alumni.

1. In the case of recent graduates, a check is made with the registrar's office to determine if any transcript requests have been submitted; if so, the alumnus's address is obtained. Otherwise, the parents' address or another relative's address is obtained, if available, from those records.

2. Where the employer is known to transfer employees frequently, the employer's public information office is contacted.

3. Directory assistance is used.

4. If the alumnus was a graduate student, his or her undergraduate school is contacted.

5. A forwarding address is requested from the post office.

6. Each issue of the alumni magazine includes an advertisement listing the names of 100 lost alumni and requesting information.

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 54,000 (total)

Number of lost alumni unreported

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: one full-time, two part-time

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. Files are checked for biographical information that may be used in tracing alumni.

2. Phone directories and directory assistance are used.

3. A tracer card is sent to the last known address, requesting updated information and a forwarding address from the post office.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, alumni are returned to the active mailing list.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 150,000 (total)

Number of Lost Alumni Unreported

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: Two

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. Stanford faces a problem not uncommon to large institutions of higher education. While its records are centralized, mailings are sent from a broad range of offices. In many cases labels are requested two to three months prior to the actual mailing. Thus, the first step in the search process is one of determining whether the address currently on system is the same as that on the piece of returned mail.

2. Change of address notification is sought through the post office.

3. Admissions records are checked to determine whether there are other references who might be contacted concerning the lost alumnus. If there are, a tracer card is sent.

4. Directory assistance is contacted in an effort to trace alumni who have moved locally.

5. Biographical files are researched for further leads.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

In general, the found alumnus is returned to the active mailing list. In the case of major donors who are lost and subsequently located, personal contact may be made by a member of the development staff.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 157,000 (total)

38,000 (lost alumni)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: Two

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

Syracuse University uses a variety of resources in tracing lost alumni, depending on the individual situation.

1. Directory assistance is called to determine whether the alumnus has moved locally.

2. Records are checked to determine whether there are any relatives listed who might know the alumnus's whereabouts.

3. If listed, the person's (former) employer is contacted.

4. In cases where parents do not appear on the alumnus's record, old university directories are checked to obtain this information.

5. Activity codes are checked, and fraternities, athletic organizations, and so on are contacted.

6. Noncomputerized records are researched to determine whether helpful information not in the system is available.

7. At any point, if a probable new address is identified but cannot be verified by direct contact with the alumnus, a questionnaire is sent.

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS

Once found, the alumnus is returned to the active mailing list, unless he or she requests otherwise.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

1. Reunion directories are published, and information is sought concerning lost alumni. Data collected in compiling the directories are used to update records.

2. Alumni records are checked against listings provided by departments, school and college offices, athletic organizations, and so on.

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YALE UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI POPULATION: 97,000 (total)

3,000 (lost or no mail)

STAFF ASSIGNED TO LOST ALUMNI RESEARCH: One half-time

LOST ALUMNI TRACING PROCEDURE:

1. Both a business and home address are kept on each alumnus. If mail is returned from one address, it is sent to the other, along with a request for updated information.

2. If both addresses prove to be no good, contact is initiated with one of the questionnaire references (see below).

CONTACTING THE FOUND ALUMNUS:

Once found, alumni are returned to the active mailing list.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. Each year alumni are mailed a ballot to select the alumni representative on the board of trustees. The ballot is accompanied by one of three different questionnaires. (These are mailed cyclically so that the alumnus receives the same questionnaire every fourth year.) All three forms request updated information concerning the alumnus's occupation, address, phone, and so on, and the name of a reference, other than spouse, who will know the person's whereabouts. The questionnaire requests more in-depth information on: (1) alumnus's family, (2) occupation, or (3) voluntary activities.

2. Class mailings include a request that information be sent to the class secretary.

3. Questionnaires are sent to alumni as reunion directories are compiled.

4. Fund raising is done through a series of agents who attempt to keep track of a small number of alumni.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

While there are many similarities in the procedures various institutions use to trace lost alumni, there are many differences as well. As one might suspect, staffing and resources play an important role. However, there are a variety of other factors involved. These include but are not limited to:

1. Historical accuracy of records. The longer an alumnus is lost, the more difficult he or she is to trace. This seems to be a greater problem for older institutions and contributes significantly to their lost alumni population.

2. Demographic distribution of alumni.

3. Definition of an alumnus. In many cases institutions have found that individuals whom they consider as alumni do not feel any loyalty toward that institution. They may have ultimately completed their education at another school and perceive the degree-granting institution as their alma mater.

4. Nature of alumnus's degree. Alumni who have received degrees in certain professions (i.e. medicine and law) are easier to trace because of the reference directories available.

5. Data collected on alumni.

6. Institutional prestige.

Some of the most significant findings of this survey are the steps that can be taken to collect data on alumni to help prevent them from becoming lost, ease the tracing process, and enhance the possibility of finding lost alumni. The importance of such measures should not be underestimated; most of those reported here are both inexpensive and effective. While such data collection does not address the problem of current lost alumni, it will help ensure that, over time, the problem becomes less serious.

Finally, one of the questions asked was whether there is any significant difference in giving patterns between the general alumni population and those alumni who were lost and have subsequently been located. The general feeling appears to be, "The more alumni we can solicit, the more successful our fund raising will be." However, none of the institutions surveyed was able to ensure that this is, in fact, the case. The need for such research is evident. Those who make

decisions on staffing and resource allocation cannot overlook the question of whether found alumni contribute less, the same as, or even more than those who ensure that we know their whereabouts.

ADDENDUM

Two of the institutions that participated in the initial study have requested that they not be included in a publicly circulated report. The methodologies used by these schools do not, for the most part, differ from those presented in this report. However, the following system is sufficiently unique to warrant mention.

Rather than using a questionnaire to gather information prior to graduation, the diploma order card serves that purpose. The following information is collected:

1. Names and addresses of two references who will always know the alumnus's whereabouts.

2. Any other degrees received and institutions they were received from.

3. Employer and/or graduate school.

4. Fraternities, sororities, and other campus activities.

APPENDIX A:

THE GREAT ALUMNI TRACE: OUT OF THE FILES AND INTO THE COMPUTER

Joyce Baggerly
Alumni Records Manager
Brigham Young University

The university safety engineers here warned us two years ago: one more piece of paper in our overcrowded file room and we might fall through the floor into the Annual Giving Department below.

We also had another problem. We were finding it hard to trace an ever-increasing alumni constituency. Yet our alumni constitution commits us to mail to each alumnus/a.

Our solution to both problems was to expand our computerized alumni tracing system. Here's how we did it.

Under our partially computerized tracing system, each alumnus/a on file had one tracing contact (usually a parent). We could contact this person to get a current address.

In three years, this system allowed us to find about 12,000 good addresses--adequate results, we thought.

But you can see the limits of such a system. What happens when the one contact can't or doesn't produce a current address? We needed a system that allowed us to store more than one contact. If we could store all those additional addresses on computer, we would make those engineers happy, too--by getting rid of some files.

So we did it. We came up with a fully computerized alumni tracing system, consisting of a tracing master file of variable length. The file contains an entry for each person for whom there is at least one tracing contact. And we can list up to 20 contacts.

We assign each contact a priority corresponding to his or her relationship to the individual being traced. For example, the parents are priority one; brothers or sisters, priority two; and so on. If we do not have any tracing information, the person's name remains on the alumni master file, but does not appear on the tracing file.

When we have a tracing run, usually every three months, we compile all alumni of no listed address. These come from the

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alumni master file, matched against the tracing file. Then, automatically, the computer produces a tracing card with the name of the person being traced, his or her BYU ID number and, of course, the name and address to whom we should send the inquiry. The mailing then goes to the person the alumnus/a has listed as next of kin (priority one).

We mail this card in a window envelope with a covering letter. (The cost is minimal. In our last processing, the cost of gaining 4,200 addresses was about 16 cents each.)

If the card with the current address has not been returned within three months, we send the mailings to priority two, then three, and so forth.

There's an added bonus in our system if a tracing contact has attended BYU. His or her ID number is inserted on the tracing record so that the contact's address changes are automatically updated. Needless to say, this saves time and money in hand research.

At this point, we have not yet transferred everyone listed on the alumni master file to our tracing file. This is because we don't have any "priority one" or other addresses for some alumni. These names without tracing contacts appear on an "error list," produced by matching blank addresses on the alumni master file with the tracing file. Names on the error list then become the subjects for staff research. We try to locate contacts for as many as possible before the next search.

By doing hand research here on campus, we can usually find enough information to develop contacts for these error list people. But this takes time.

Meanwhile, we're making certain we keep up with today's students, tomorrow's alumni. As soon as students have the required number of credit hours to be considered prospective alumni, we extract from the university's student computer file the names and addresses of their next of kin. Then we add the subsequent priorities by hand research.

How has our new system saved us file space? Two years ago, when we looked into our files, we found more old tracing data (cards, forms) than biographical data. So we eliminated the cards and forms. With our new tracing system, we didn't need them.

Wherever possible now, we cull a file onto one 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of information per alumnus/a and file it alphabetically in a notebook. What has been stored in two five-drawer file cabinets now fills about one bookcase. For those alumni

whose biographical information cannot be contained on one page, we still have individual folders.

The result? So far, we've cleaned out 28 of the 85 five-drawer file cabinets in our office. With the sale of the cabinets and the 50,000 used folders, we have more than recovered the cost of setting up our computerized tracing system.

We estimate it will take another three or four years to finish clearing our cabinets, leaving us with about 10 full cabinets and six bookcases of 39 notebooks each.

Our alumni constituency, now at 175,000, will top 200,000 in the next couple of years. Although we were forced to use a computer to keep up with our growing constituency, we now find we like our system. Being able to mail requests for 9,000 blank addresses using about three minutes of computer time certainly beats our old tracing methods.

If you'd like more details about the BYU tracing system, write to me. The address is Brigham Young University, Alumni Records, Alumni House, Provo, UT 84602.

APPENDIX B:

"LOST" DONORS: 90% MAY BE RECOVERABLE

Addressee Unknown...No Such Address...Moved--Not Forwardable... Moved Left No Address. After every bulk-rate fund-raising mailing, a certain percentage of the envelopes comes back with these fatal-sounding pronouncements (or some variation) stamped on them by the post office. In the average list of individuals' names, up to 6% of the addresses can be expected to meet this fate annually. More than half of these will be in the "Moved--Left No Forwarding Address" category, according to statistics compiled by the Center for Direct Marketing; but 90% of such names in this category are recoverable. With work, you can find the right address and resume the relationship. What's more, the Center estimates that 50% of the "No Such Address" returns are recoverable, as are 30% of the "Addressee Unknown." Hardest to recover are the addresses that come back marked "Moved--Not Forwardable"; only 10% of these can be recovered, namely because they tend to result from deaths. The statistics become all the more significant in light of the Center's estimate that direct-mail fund-raisers lose an average of $70 in gift income each time they lose track of one of their donor's addresses. In a donor list of, say, 50,000 names, a 6% loss equals 3,000 donors per year or, at $70 each, $210,000 in lost gifts over the years.

How do you go about getting some of this gift-income back? Four fairly simple techniques are recommended to recover those marked "Moved--Left No Forwarding Address" and Addressee Unknown": 1) send a tracer mailing; 2) call the phone company's information service; 3) contact the neighbors; 4) publish the lost name. Here's how you do it.

Tracer Mailing. Send a piece of first-class mail to the same address that your bulk-rate mailing was returned from as undeliverable. Mark the envelope "Address Correction Requested: Use Form 3547." Inside, enclose a letter and reply card. Tell the missing donor the post office says his

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or her address has changed and that you would appreciate having the donor use the reply card to give you the correct address.

This step will relocate 20% to 40% of the missing donors in the "Moved--Left No Forwarding Address" and "Addressee Unknown" categories, the Center says. But sometimes, unfortunately, it will show that the results of the first mailing were correct; there's no way to get the letter through. What then?

Call Information. Query your phone company's information service. The center finds that 67% of all moves, when your donor changes address, are within the same county. And 80% are within the same metropolitan area. You just ask the information operator for the phone number of your lost donor, not giving an address, but suggesting he probably lives in the same county as he did before he moved. If the operator can't find the name there, call back and give other counties in the same metropolitan area. And if this fails, repeat the procedure in 30 days; the donor may have surfaced by then. If you do get a phone number, ask the operator what the address is. Operators sometimes give an address to confirm the correctness of the number. If the operator won't give the address, phone the donor and ask for it. This technique should recover 40% to 70% of your still-lost donors. For those who are still missing, proceed to the next step.

Contact Neighbors. This means you have to go to your library or phone company and look up your missing donor in a street directory. Such directories list the names, addresses and phone numbers of phone subscribers in street-address sequence. Get the names, addresses and phone numbers of the two adjacent neighbors of each lost donor. "For distant metro areas," the Center suggests, "you can send names to the local Chamber of Commerce. They are usually happy to look them up." If it's a nearby number, you call the neighbor, asking for the donor's new address. Or write to the neighbor if it's in a distant area. A variation on this is simply to address your inquiry to "Occupant" at the donor's old address; perhaps the new resident will know where the old one went. If none of these steps works, you might try reaching relatives, employers or any other contacts your files can reveal. All of this should recover 50% of the donors who remained lost. Now the final step, after which you should give up.

Publish the Name. List the lost donors in your newsletter or magazine, if you publish one for constituents. Ask for leads on their new addresses. You might consider regionalized inserts for listing missing names. "These final efforts can

often bring recovery results [to] over 90%," predicts the Center for Direct Marketing.

"Many direct mail users balk at what appears to be a lot of work when these techniques for address correction and recovery are first outlined to them," the Center concludes. "If you are the least bit dubious that the effort is worth it, just keep recovered names separate from your mail...file and track the amount of profit you make from them in relation to the cost of recovery. Your expenditure will normally be returned five to fifty times over!"

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE TRACING CARDS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This is your personal and permanent record in our alumni files. It should be complete, but you may omit any question you cannot or prefer not to answer. If additional space is needed, please use extra sheet of paper and mail to us in an envelope. Thank you very much.

Mr.
Mrs.
Miss_____ IF MRS., MAIDEN NAME_____

ADDRESS_____ CITY, STATE, ZIP_____

DEGREE AND YEAR_____ IF NO DEGREE, SCHOOL & YEAR_____ MAJOR SUBJECT_____ YEAR OF BIRTH_____

FRATERNITY OR SORORITY_____ SCHOLASTIC OR SERVICE HONORARIES_____

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN BAND, ROTUNDA, SMU CAMPUS? IF SO WHICH_____

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY SPORT? IF SO WHICH_____

COLLEGES ATTENDED OTHER THAN SMU_____

COLLEGE ATTENDED BY SPOUSE_____ NAME_____ WHEN_____ GRADUATE_____

NAME OF PARENTS OR GUARDIAN_____

ADDRESS_____ CITY, STATE, ZIP_____

YOUR BUSINESS ADDRESS_____ CITY, STATE, ZIP_____

FIRM_____ TITLE OR POSITION_____

DID RELATIVES ATTEND SMU? FATHER_____ MOTHER_____ OTHER_____

NAME & ADDRESS OF SOMEONE (OTHER THAN SPOUSE OR PARENTS) MOST LIKELY TO KNOW YOUR ADDRESS AT ANY TIME_____

_____

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

We need your help. We wish a correct address for this former student of Southern Methodist University. Will you please fill in the attached card for us? If you cannot help us, can you tell us someone who can?

We will appreciate any help you can give us.

RECORDS DEPARTMENT
SMU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Date .....

Name ..... **Class** .....

Please send us (his, her) current mailing address. SMU mail was returned to us. Thank you for a prompt reply.

Present home address:

Correct Name .....

Street and Number .....

City ..... **State** ..... **Zip** .....

Business address, giving firm name, official position, etc.

.....

.....

Please Sign .....

Address .....

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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS | Development Office

820 COMSTOCK AVENUE | SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13210
(315) 423-2432

Dear Syracusan:

Our office has recently received information indicating a change should be made to your records.

Your assistance in completing and returning this form will allow us to keep our records current. This will ensure that you will continue to receive news about your alma mater as well as information on the benefits for which you are eligible.

Name _____

Home Street _____

Home City/state/zip _____

Home Phone ( ) _____

Business Title _____

Name of Business _____

Business Address _____

Business City/state/zip _____

Business Phone ( ) _____ Extension _____

Prefer to S.U. to use Home _____ Business _____ Address

Undergraduate Degree _____ Date _____ School _____

Graduate Degree _____ Date _____ School _____

Sororities/Fraternities _____

Honors _____

Activities _____

Date of Birth _____ Marital Status _____

Your Maiden Name _____

Name of Spouse _____

Spouse School Affiliation _____

Relative Who Attended S.U. _____

Relationship _____ Class _____

Name, Address of person to contact other than spouse

_____

_____

Comments _____

_____

Signature _____ 42 _____ Date _____

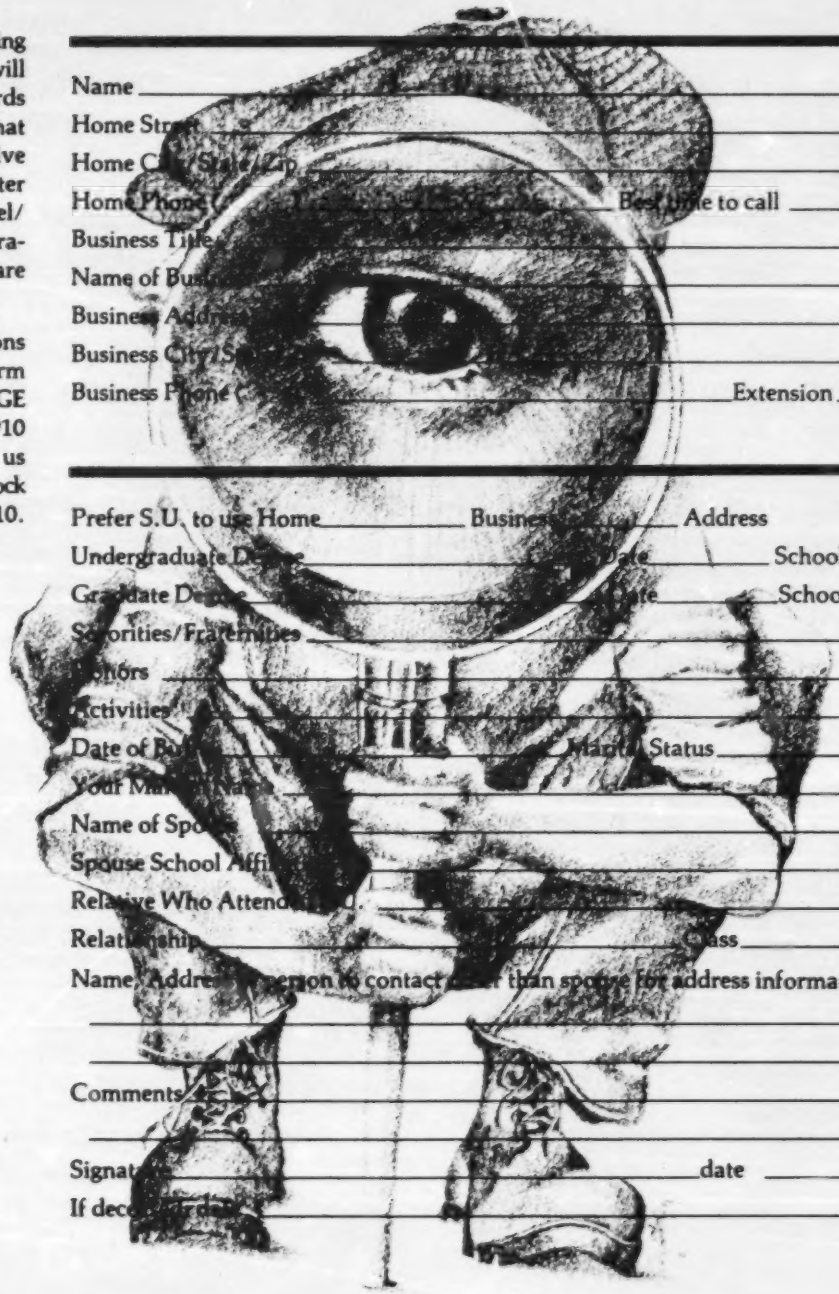
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS | ORANGE UPDATE

820 COMSTOCK AVENUE | SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13210

Your assistance in completing and returning this form will allow us to keep our records current and to ensure that you will continue to receive news about your alma mater and information on travel/insurance benefits which Syracuse University Alumni are eligible for.

If you have any questions about completing this form please feel free to call **ORANGE UPDATE** at (315) 423-3910 or 423-3925 or write to us at - Alumni Office, 820 Comstock Ave., Syracuse, N.Y. 13210.



Name _____

Home Street _____

Home City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Best time to call _____

Business Title _____

Name of Business _____

Business Address _____

Business City/State/Zip _____

Business Phone (_____) _____ Extension _____

Prefer S.U. to use Home _____ Business _____ Address

Undergraduate Degree _____ Date _____ School _____

Graduate Degree _____ Date _____ School _____

Sororities/Fraternities _____

Honors _____

Activities _____

Date of Birth _____ Marital Status _____

Your Maiden Name _____

Name of Spouse _____

Spouse School Affiliation _____

Relative Who Attended S.U. _____

Relationship _____ Class _____

Name/Address of person to contact other than spouse for address information

_____

_____

Comments _____

_____

Signature _____ date _____

If deceased, date _____

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS | ORANGE UPDATE
820 COMSTOCK AVENUE
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13210

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YALE UNIVERSITY

Yale University

Mail sent to the Yale alumnus whose name and last known address are given below has been returned by the postal service. We are sorry to trouble you but it will be appreciated if you will supply us with the information requested. A card is attached for your convenience in answering. Thank you for your cooperation.

Alumni Records Office
P.O. Box 1950 Yale Station
New Haven, Conn. 06520

Present residence address: **Zip Codes**

Present business address (include name of company or organization):

Present occupation (state position, or type of work):

Permanent address for reference purposes:

Signed:

(Please underline preferred mailing address)